The
Niagara Advance
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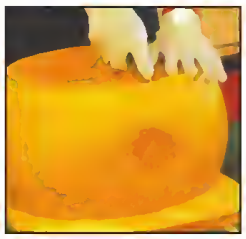

Cutting the cheese

Phil's Valu-mart helps set a new world record

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You Gotta Eat Here

Garrison House featured on popular Food Network show

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Parliament Oak girls earn silver

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Sign of spring

Penny Coles Niagara Advance

Pleasant Manor resident Helen Neufeld accepts a bouquet of flowers from NOTL Horticultural Society volunteer Irene Bader, Friday, with rereatioal therapist Chelsea Bilton looking on. Each resident received a bouquet as a sign of spring, an annual project for horticultural society members.

MPP keeps pressure on government

Wayne Gates again presses premier to keep Parliament Oak open

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

He said he wouldn't give up, and he hasn't.

For the third time since he became a member of the opposition at Queen's Park a little more than a month ago, MPP Wayne Gates has pressed for a commitment to stop the closure of Parliament Oak Public School.

"It's time for the premier to listen to local voices. The community, parents, the lord mayor, city council, the Chamber of Commerce and the government's own Accommodation Review Committee, all say the school should stay open," Gates said in the legislature last Thursday during his member's statement, an opportunity each MPP is given to speak on any issue they choose.

"It's an opportunity to highlight whatever issue you want," the fledgling MPP told the Advance.

See Page 3

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Town powerless in face of federal commercial marijuana legislation

Suzanne Mason
Special to the Advance

One conditional licence for growing medicinal marijuana in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has been approved by Health Canada under new regulations coming into effect April 1 and at least seven more applications have been received for grow-ops.

The lack of input into the federally-regulated program by council and local residents brought out concern and frustration at town council Monday. One resident, Egidio Carone, had asked to speak on the issue, but he failed to meet the deadline to get on the agenda as a delegation.

But some of the problems he's encountered as a neighbour who lives a few hundred metres from the Lake Shore Rd. greenhouses, he said in an email, include "the terrible visual appearance for local residents and tourists," the rotten, musty smell emanating from the greenhouses, and break-ins in the area. He fears the existing problems will only worsen if the operation is granted a commercial licence.

Coun. Martin Mazza said there are rumours and suspicions among residents about the new regulations that will require authorized marijuana users to purchase the drug through a government-authorized facility.

"What do we do now?" he asked. "There is no opportunity for residents to add input."

NOTL's chief administrative officer Mike Galloway said the new regulations are very onerous but licensed producers could grow the plants in greenhouses on agriculturally-zoned land where any legal type of crops are permitted.

"The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is not approving marijuana growing operations," Galloway said, noting that Health Canada provides notification to municipalities and the local police force when applications for licences are received.

"That doesn't mean we have any control or decision-making," he said. "It just means they are required to give us notification."

Lord Mayor Dave Eke said he was shocked to see a high fence and barbed wiring at a medical marijuana facility that is currently operating on Lakeshore Rd., the site of a former rose-growing operation.

"It looked more like the Thorold Detention Centre," he said, of the property that is currently permitted to grow up to 2,000 plants for medicinal use.

That permit will expire at the end of the month when the new legislation takes effect.

Mazza requested that town staff gather more information about the new legislation, including contacting MP Rob Nicholson and Niagara Regional Police Chief Jeffery McGuire.

Coun. Terry Flynn suggested that staff also contact other municipalities in the Region to see what they are doing about potential grow-ops.

"Information from other municipalities would give us more clout," he said.

Eke said the marijuana growing regulations are similar to other pieces of legislation from senior levels of government, such as those regarding wind energy or solar panels, "where they make the rules and we are supposed to enforce (them)."

The mayor said he would like the town to hold a public meeting for local residents but "until we know the rules, we will have a hard time pushing back."

Staff will report back to council next month on the issue.

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Without pressure, Parliament Oak issue 'will die on the vine'

From Page 1

Gates chose to use his 90 seconds to speak about Parliament Oak.

"I urge the premier to commit to keep Parliament Oak Public School open and to use it as a model school for all of Ontario," Gates said.

The other issue dear to his heart, he said, is the Fort Erie Race Track, and NDP leader Andrea Horwath used her time in the legislature to demand Premier Kathleen Wynne ensure the track has the funding it needs to continue operating.

The member's statement process does not demand the response a question posed during question period would, says Gates, but it keeps an issue front and centre.

The MPP used his time to talk about the school's history as the site of the first parliament of Upper Canada and its significance to the Old Town and cited past and projected expenditures showing it will cost almost $3 million to close the school.

"Parliament Oak Public School is the heart of the community in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It is the last public school left in the Old Town. Unfortunately this historic school is slated for closure even though the government just invested $1.6 million in renovations and upgrades. As a result of the planned closure of Parliament Oak, the school board is looking at spending $1.3 million in expansion plans for a new school built only two years ago," Gates said.

He questioned the Liberal government's past claims about supporting Ontario's rural schools.

"This Liberal government used to praise the role that rural schools played in small town Ontario. They used to call them community hubs. Local schools used to be important to this Liberal government. What happened?"

Gates says he ran on four issues: the Fort Erie Race Track, Parliament Oak, jobs and health care, and he will use every opportunity to speak to those issues.

"I will continue to put pressure on the government every chance I get."

The premier met with parents "and her comments gave them some hope," he said.

"If you take a look at the facts, listen to the arguments, and to the people who are supporting Parliament Oak, everybody is saying the same thing—it doesn't make sense to close this school," said Gates.

CARE, the parent group lobbying trustees to keep the school open, is providing the facts and figures that show the school should stay open.

"You can't question the credibility of this group or their information. They're right on the money, doing what's best for the kids, families and the community," he said.

"Hopefully the premier will listen."

When there's an election around the corner, governments are sometimes more committed to doing things they might not do otherwise, he added, and this could be the case with Parliament Oak.

"Hopefully, with all of us working together, including the government and the opposition, we can make this happen. But for sure if I don't say anything, it will die on the vine."

Parliament Oak parents were at the regular meeting of school board trustees Tuesday to answer some of the questions that have been posed to them, and to continue presenting their case for keeping the Old Town school open.

They will have another opportunity to address trustees April 8. A decision is expected April 22.

MPP Wayne Gates puts pressure on Permier Kathleen Wynne in the legislature to commit to keeping Parliament Oak open.
Photo by QMI Agency Niagara

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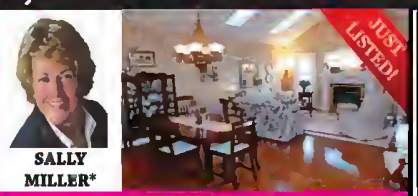

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St. Catharines hospital treatment of senior 'unacceptable'

Health system CEO Kevin Smith will be held to account at NOTL council meeting

Suzanne Mason
Special to the Advance

The treatment of an elderly Niagara-on-the-Lake resident, who was discharged two weeks ago by the new hospital in St. Catharines without proper clothing or shoes in a snowstorm, raised the ire of town council Monday.

Coun. Jamie King said the discharge of 77-year-old Gabor Joo by the Niagara Health System, when he did not have a ride home or a key to his house, is unacceptable.

His case also prompted King to question whether local residents would be better off going to the Greater Niagara General Hospital in Niagara Falls due to the difficulties and expense of travelling to the hospital in west St. Catharines.

"We have contributed greatly to the funding of the new hospital," said King.

"(But) we are one of the more challenging communities in the region to get to that location. Is my home hospital St. Catharines or Niagara Falls?"

Lord Mayor Dave Eke agreed that the location of the new hospital is not the best for local residents who have to contend with train tracks and canals in addition to the distance.

He also said the only direct route to the Niagara Falls hospital is via Four Mile Creek Rd., but he is hoping there will be a public transit link soon at the Outlet Collection at Niagara mall which is slated to open in May.

"This is not the first time council has raised concerns," said Coun. Gary Zalepa Jr.

"This is a serious problem. Here we are funding something that is almost impossible to get to."

Councillors also expressed concerns about services for local residents with the likely closure of the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital site when a new hospital for South Niagara is built.

"Maybe it is time for Dr. Kevin Smith (chief executive officer of the Niagara Health System) to come and give us a report card . . . on where we are at," said Coun. Terry Flynn.

King agreed that inviting Smith to address council's questions and concerns about the future of health care delivery for town residents would be a good idea.

Councillors unanimously approved his motion to invite Smith to a council meeting.

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Penny Coles Niagara Advance

Sara Leboudec and her brother Austin compare components of playground equipment under consideration for the Virgil Sports Park, beside the splash pad. It should be completed by the end of June.

VBA members, kids vote for favourite playground design

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

Kids will have a new place to play in town this summer, and adults a new work-out location.

But first the parks and recreation department has to make a choice.

Thursday afternoon Clive Buist, parks and recreation director, displayed four different designs for playground equipment that have been submitted from different companies, and four designs for adult fitness equipment to be installed at the Virgil Sports Park, in the area of the splash pad.

The project was conceived as the second phase of the splash pad, to be installed when funds were available. It is expected to be completed and enjoyed by kids and adults by the end of June.

The total cost of all the equipment, including benches, shade trees and park restoration, is expected to be $190,000. Of that, $50,000 has been donated by the Virgil Business Association and the 2013 Town Golf Classic has contributed $21,179 to the project The remainder will come from parks and development charges reserves, said Buist.

Because of the large donation from the VBA, where the idea for the project originated—the organization donated $125,000 to the splash pad—members were invited to view the designs Thursday, and vote for their favourites.

VBA members were also encouraged to bring their kids, to see what the young people in town would prefer in the way of playground equipment.

Parks and recreation staff will take those comments into consideration, but will also be looking at what will be the longest-lasting and most cost-effective as far as maintenance, said Buist.

Sara Leboudec, 11, and her brother Austin, 6, visited the Mary Snider Room at the Virgil arena Thursday, to have a look at the designs.

They were both in agreement when choosing their first and second choices, and their father, VBA member Phil Leboudec, came up with the same choices independently of their discussion.

He liked a design that had a palm-tree cover to one of the climbers, with a tree-house ladder—it fit with the splash pad, he said.

His kids took their time when considering and chose the design with the components they liked the best.

"They're playground aficionados—they've been to enough of them. They know what they like, and that design seemed to have the elements they're interested in."

It might not be the one the parks and recreation department staff choose—that particular design has some surfaces that would be difficult to clean if it ends up a victim of graffiti. "It's a shame that we have to think about that," said Leboudec, "but that's the reality, and it's the job of the staff to consider maintenance issues."

There also seemed to be consensus on the adult equipment—one particular design came with signage that was discreet, but also contained sufficient information to explain how safely to use it.

The signs also included a bar code for an app that could provide a personalized fitness program, tailored to age and fitness level.

"There are only so many options when it comes to fitness equipment," said Leboudec.

"But I really liked the low profile of the signs. They were very informative without being too front and centre."

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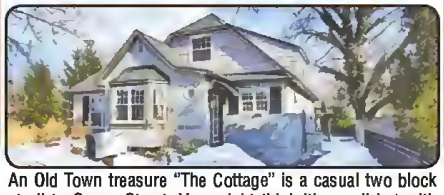

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opinion page

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our editorial

MPP determined to be heard in legislature

Whether or not the voters of Niagara-on-the-Lake marked their ballots for NDP MPP Wayne Gates in the February byelection, they have a good representative working for them.

He's tenacious. He's a bulldog. He doesn't let up.

And he's the opposition, which at the moment seems to be working for him, and for the constituents of his riding.

There's an advantage to being able to say what's on his mind, to being able to criticize the government and push for change.

And it's a bonus that he represents an opposition that is shoring up a minority party, with an election in the not-too-distant future.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, we are benefitting from his dogged determination to keep the issue of Parliament Oak Public School and the school board staff recommendation for closure front and centre in the legislature. He used every opportunity he's given to speak about it, and he promises to continue doing so.

He's committed to shaming the premier, who met with Parliament Oak parents and offered encouragement in their battle, into acting on their behalf. Every chance he gets, he reminds the Liberal government that Parliament Oak, with its high academic achievements, should be a model for all schools across Ontario.

If Liberal MPPs could be forgiven for not being familiar with the noble history and uncertain future of the Old Town school just a couple of months ago, that is no longer the case.

Gates also continues to call for a long-term operating plan to keep the Fort Erie Race Track alive, and this week tabled a job-creator motion for tax credits to reward employers for every new hire—an initiative that seems popular with small businesses such as family wineries. It is seen as a method of not only putting people back to work but also helping employers expand their business with the ability to hire more people.

It's obviously a lot easier to keep election promises as a member of the opposition—at this point, all Gates has to do it keep pressure on the Liberal government—but he is certainly making hay while the sun shines, and we give him credit for doing it on behalf of Parliament Oak.

40 winks pay off

Christa Hawsthorne and Steffanie Bjorgan of Red Roof Retreat accept a cheque from Ian Shulman of Niagara's Finest Inns, (Harbour House, Charles Inn, Shaw Club and Colonel Butler Best Western) which hosted the 6th Annual 40 Winks recently, when residents of the region have the opportunity to spend a night at a discounted rate. The event was sold out at the three hotels, with $7,500 raised for Red Roof in one night. Red Roof Retreat provides recreational, educational and respite services to children and young adults with special needs and their families.

letters to the editor

Shouldn't town be cleaning ice off Queen St. sidewalks?

I When walking last week I came across a 20-foot stretcher of thick ice on the sidewalk in front of 284 Queen St.

So I had to back track and walk on the road. I phoned the works department of Niagara-on-the-Lake and they only have a policy of clearing the sidewalk if there is three inches of snow.

They had me call the bylaw department. The gentleman there called me back, and after a few phone calls found out for me that the sidewalk is public property and therefore the town's responsibility, but there is no policy to keep the sidewalks clear of ice.

I can walk on snow, but the ice is quite treacherous.

Amazing that the town of NOTL is not concerned for the safety of its townspeople or the many tourists who visit us.

Good on you.

Helen King

Politician served with passion

My sincere sympathy is extended to Gail and the family in the recent death of Michael Dietsch.

Michael left this life in a well-planned snow storm. (I hope it wasn't to keep me away.)

I had the privilege of serving this town on council with Michael for several years.

His tenacity and passion in his political life were never questioned. His strong stride was an example of the same way he tackled any problem.

Michael and I were at times on different sides but the mutual respect was never in doubt that we had for each other regardless of how vigorous the discussion.

Michael's example of a politician's role is not as evident in today's political realm. He served his town with a passion. He represented the Canada we all should be proud of.

A job well done Mike. Rest in peace.

I believe the park in Michael's name should have also included Gail's name. Gail was a quiet strength and a part of Michael's political success.

Take good care Gail.

Nellie Keeler

opinion

Newark needs warm work clothes

Also time to register for help with Easter dinner

Barbara Ahluwalia
Newark Neighbours

Thank you to Parliament Oak School for all the groceries that the students collected, a great addition to our food bank.

Thanks also for the donations from Grace United Men's Club and from Mikey's Antiques.

I think I jumped the gun last time assuming that the Arctic Vortex had passed us by when we had the blizzard two weeks ago—no such luck.

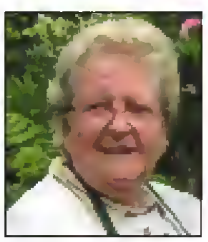
The farm workers from the sunny Caribbean are here, and need warm jackets, gloves, hoodies and especially boots, as the fields are very muddy.

If you have any tucked away they would be appreciated.

Bicycles are also needed.

Newark Neighbours is open Monday Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Call 905-468-3519 if you need us.

Time to prune back some shrubs



Jean Cochrane
Happy Gardening

I am not the most patient gardener and that latest snow just did not help me at all.

My only solution was to get some peat pots and start planting. I started with some new canna bulbs I picked up. One bulb per pot in a good soil mix, add some bone meal and give them a little water to get them started – when they are up and showing I will plant them out in the planters. For now I will keep them in the warmth and give them a good start.

There are a lot of places stocking a variety of bulbs right now so go have a look, try something new.

One thing we can do just now is prune back our summer flowering shrubs and trees – start by removing all the dead wood. Spirea, butterfly bush, and pee gee hydrangea can be cut back by one-third.

Rose of Sharon and clematis can be cut back by one-third their height. If you are unsure, it's safe to cut back by half the plant's height.

For roses, remove dead wood and shorten any branches that are thinner than a pencil. Don't prune your spring flowering shrubs such as forsythia, purple sand cherry, flowering almond, lilac and mock orange. These bloom on the previous season's growth and should be pruned after they bloom.

Indoor primulas are doing well and providing some welcome colour.

Photo submitted

Prepare a quick-start growth stimulant for perennial plants – try a mix of equal parts blood, bone and kelp meals. Scratch 125 ml around each plant's root system.

So we have made a start and I feel better. My indoor primulas are doing well and make me feel good as this cold weather drags on. Yay spring!

Happy gardening.

letters to the editor

MP recalls Mike Dietsch as dedicated public servant

I was very sorry to hear of the passing of Mike Dietsch.

He was an outstanding public citizen who served Niagara-on-the-Lake, as well as the Province of Ontario, and Canada, for many years

I was proud to serve with him during his time as a Provincial Member of Parliament, his term as Lord Mayor of NOTL, and as a fellow councillor on Regional Council. I was pleased to see that he was willing to continue his public service as a member of the Canada Pension Plan Review Tribunal for six years as well.

I will always remember the first time that I met Mike Dietsch.

In 1984, I had recently been elected as the MP for Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake, and was on my way to Niagara-on-the-Lake to participate in the Santa Claus parade.

Just as I was wondering where I would leave my car around Butler's Barracks, and where I should go for the parade, I was approached by a parade volunteer who introduced himself to me as Mike Dietsch. He could not have been more helpful.

Years later, as I returned to my role as an MP, I was invited to participate in the 2004 Santa Claus parade. As I was driving down to Niagara-on-the-Lake from Niagara Falls, I remembered meeting Mike all those years before.

This will surprise no one who knew Mike, but standing there again near Butlers Barrack's, helping out with the Santa Claus parade, was Mike. He never stopped volunteering and contributing to the best interests of the people in Niagara.

Mike Dietsch was a truly dedicated public servant, and everyone who knew him will miss him.

Hon. Rob Nicholson, M.P.

Tax rebate a welfare benefit for heritage property owners, reader believes

Coun. Gary Zalepa propses public discussions about the 40% tax rebate of the private heritage property owner's welfare program to convnce us to pay even more in taxes to support a select group of about 290 private property owners (Niagara Advance, March 13).

The Chamber of Commerce implies that the market assessment values for these privately-owned properties are too high. If so, then why did these property owners not appeal the market value assessments years ago?

But then, perhaps the Chamber does not understand the concept of market value—like what an item is worth on the open market.

If the Chamber is so concerned about the high market value assessments, then the Chamber could offer some instructional classes to these private property owners on how to fill out the necessary forms to get the properties re-assessed, rather than pitching for welfare benefits.

Expanding on the Chamber's pitch to support these private property owners, these owners either

a) agree with the market value assessments—then pay your taxes like the rest of us;

b) are too lazy to appeal the market value assessments; or

c) are looking for free money from the NOTL private heritage property owner's welfare program, paid for one way or another by the rest of us.

Maybe somebody can take the time to tell us which of the above applies.

Coun. Maria Bau-Coote got it right when she said, "We choose where we live and the homes we live in, knowing the costs for upkeep."

H.P. Hofer

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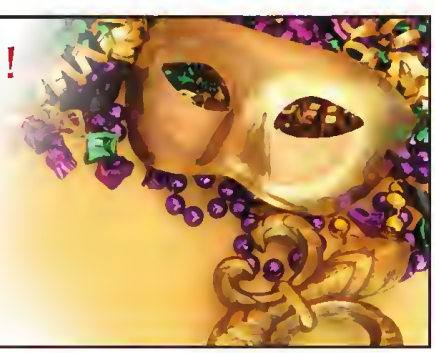

Welcome to Spring event appreciated more than ever this year

After what has seemed like an unusually-long winter, cheery floral arrangements are very much appreciated by seniors

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

After a winter that seemed never-ending, a group of women were doing their best to hasten spring.

Volunteers with the Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society spent last Friday morning at the Virgil arena Mary Snider Room, working to bring cheer to local patients and long-term care residents and hoping to brighten up their day with some colourful, -cheery floral arrangements.

It's an annual tradition that goes back about 20 years when volunteers with the horticultural society first decided they would deliver spring bouquets to the long-term care homes in town, and to patients at the NOTL Hospital.

Horticultural society president Kathryn Durand, with floral designer Hilary Bellis, handed out the brightly-coloured daisies to about 30 volunteers, with brief instructions on how to arrange them.

The results, says Durand, were the best she has seen yet. And the most welcome, after a long, harsh winter that won't seem to quit.

Perhaps because of that, the turn-out of volunteers was also the best yet, she said.

"After this very long winter, we all need a breath of spring."

When she delivered boxes of the floral arrangements to Chateau Gardens, they were very much appreciated, she said.

It was lunch time, and the residents were on their way to the dining room to eat. "It was lovely, and very uplifting, the way their faces just lit up. They were really excited about it."

As much as the seniors enjoy the annual tradition, the volunteers get at least as much of a kick out of making the arrangements.

"It's fun, a very enjoyable morning," says Durand.

"It's a social occasion, and everyone has a great time."

The horticultural society was established in 1917 and is one of the oldest in Ontario. Its mandate is to give back to the community, and providing flowers to residents in seniors' homes and the hospital helps to fulfill that mandate.

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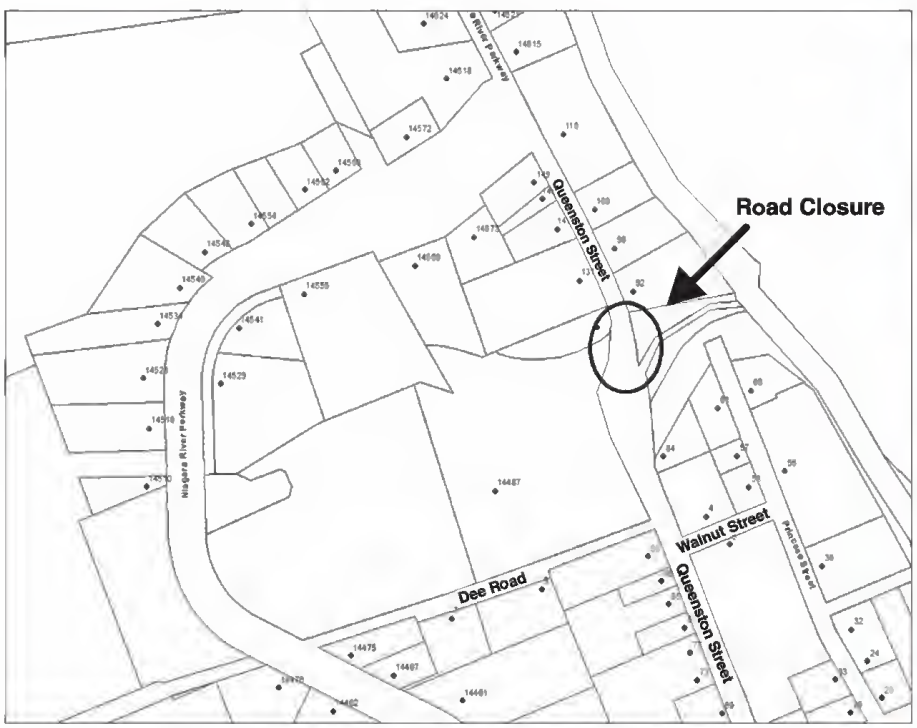
ROAD CLOSURE – QUEENSTON STREET



The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake will be rehabilitating the existing bridge on Queenston Street, between Dee Road and Niagara River Parkway. The work is scheduled to be undertaken from March 31 to June 27, 2014.

The section of road at the structure will be closed to all through traffic for the duration of the construction. (Please see the above sketch.)

A detour route will be provided around the site for local traffic. This closure is necessary to facilitate a shorter construction schedule for the rehabilitation of the structure.

Emergency Services will not have access over the bridge during the construction period.

Please direct any inquiries concerning this project to Doug Kerr, Deputy Director of Public Works, at 905-468-3278.

Thank you for your co-operation during this time.

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Penny Coles Niagara Advance

Volunteers with the NOTL Horticultural Society spend a couple of hours at the Mary Snider Room in the Virgil arena Friday morning making floral arrangements to give to residents of the seniors' homes in town and patients at the NOTL Hospital. It's an annual Welcome to Spring event that has been a tradition for the last 20 years.

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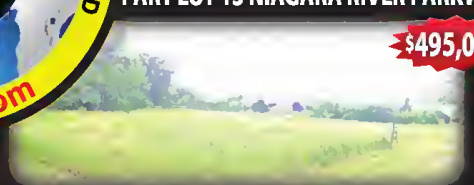

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470 DORCHESTER STREET $469,000

Established residential neighbourhood is the setting for this recently updated 3 + 1 bedroom home. Walkout lower level to 200+ft deep yard. Everything is done - just move in!

46 LORETTA DRIVE $424,900

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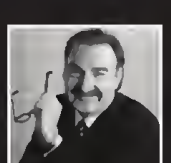

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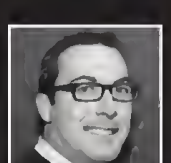

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Airport commission aims for future development

$11 million investment has paid off

Randy Klaassen
Special to the Advance

After a few of years of uncertainty the Niagara District Airport in Niagara-on-the-Lake is operating on solid ground.

It was reported at the airport commission's annual meeting last week that with significant remodeling, of more than $11 million dollars of investment two years ago, there bas been increased private and business aircraft using the airport.

Newly elected Airport Commission Chairman Gary Murphy brings 34 years of aviation experience to his role of guiding on-going operations and future developments.

A retired resident of NOTL, Murphy is putting his skills and knowledge to good use in service to the wider community of Niagara.

In his opening remarks as chairman, he gave credit to the excellent work of Airport Manager Len O'Connor, and his staff, for positioning the facilities for further development.

This past year saw changes in staffing at the airport. The full-time administrator position was eliminated, with intentions of hiring a part-time executive assistant.

This comes with same staffing support from each of the three municipalities that own Niagara District Airport, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and NOTL.

Keeping aircraft moving, Lisa Juras was promoted to airport maintenance supervisor, while Cliff Reinhart was hired as airport maintenance specialist.

With O'Connor they were kept busy this winter with 34 snow clearing operations, compared to last year's six operations.

Airport commission treasurer, Terry Flynn reported that the operating cost of the airport for next year is projected at $2.28 per resident of the three supporting municipalities.

See Page 12

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WYN KALAGIAN
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April 5 - 27, 2014
Wyn's passion is painting with vibrant colours. Her purpose is raising money for the Guatemala Stove Project, a Canadian organization that provides funds to build vented masonry stoves in rural villages of Guatemala.

Money from sales of Wyn's paintings supports this effort.

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Airport festival a go this summer

From Page 10

That works out to coffee change, he said.

What is anticipated is $1.29 for operations, $0.91 for capital investments and $0.18 for an airport planner, Flynn said.

The capital investment is based on a Capital Asset Management Plan that anticipates a 10-year working capital plan to maintain the existing operations with regard to lifespan and replacement costs.

The airport planner will work on development of a business plan which will include charters related to tourism and scheduled service, said Flynn, and will also prepare cost estimates for development of additional hangers at the south west and south east areas of the airport property.

Murphy said the commission is still working toward the feasibility of charter passenger service.

The main challenge, he said, will be to develop facilities to operate departure security screening, and arrival customs screening, as the current focus is on international operations to a major hub in the United States.

The commission will be looking to the provincial and federal governments for assistance in working on these arrangements, he said.

A realistic charter service will take time to develop and need to start small, Murphy added.

The airport is looking forward to showcasing the facilities and equipment this summer with AirportFest 2014 on Saturday, Aug. 16.

Along with local aviation operators it is anticipated Canadian Forces will participate with static display of Search And Rescue aircraft, in conjunction with the Civil Air Rescue Emergency Service based at the airport.

Randy Klaassen
Special to the Advance

Gary Murphy, airport commission chairman, and Len O'Connor, airport manager, spoke of a solid future for the Niagara District Airport at the annual meeting of the commission last Wednesday.

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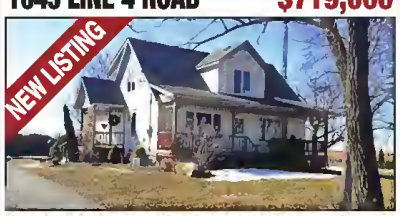
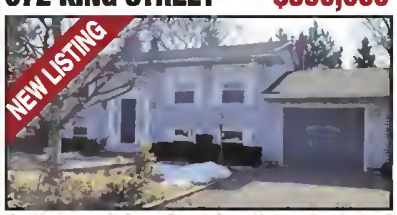


Country Setting in the heart of Niagara. A well-appointed home with 13 acre grape farm, 5 minutes from both Virgil and NOTL town centre. The house and barn were renovated 12 years ago. **MLS N30030246. Chris Bowron & Audrey Wright.**

672 KING STREET $390,000



Quality raised bungalow close to orchards and vineyards and walking distance to main street. Home offers 4 bedrooms, woodstove, fully finished basement with walkout, newer roof and attached garage. **MLS New. Thomas Elltoft and Kim Elltoft**

3 EVERGREEN ESTATES $524,900

Showcasing quality built freehold townhomes consisting of 18 units located in prime location of old town. Luxury high end finishes include hardwood on main floor, granite counter tops in kitchen, tile and glass main floor bathrooms, interlocked driveways and professional landscaping. **MLS N30022465. Thomas Elltoft and Kim Elltoft.**

13 EVERGREEN ESTATES $509,500

Showcasing quality built freehold townhomes consisting of 18 units located in prime location of old town. Luxury high end finishes include hardwood on main floor, granite counter tops in kitchen, tile and glass main floor bathrooms, interlocked driveways and professional landscaping. **MLS N30022466. Thomas Elltoft and Kim Elltoft.**

131 ARTHUR STREET $599,000

Custom built, water-front bungalow overlooking Lake Ontario. Beautiful view of Toronto skyline and sunsets. Separate apartment in lower level with walkout to the beach. **MLS N30023524. Ralph Tallman.**

1096 LINE 9 ROAD $750,000

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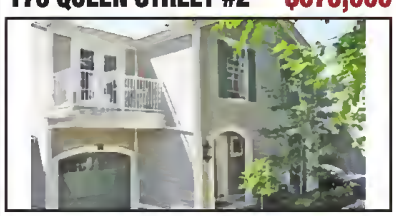
175 QUEEN STREET #2 $675,000



Custom designed elegant open concept town home located in the heart of town. Features three bedrooms, 3+ bath, finished lower level, private garden. Many extra features, a rare find! **MLS N30021360. Victoria Bolduc.**

788 CHARLOTTE STREET $545,000

Desirable neighbourhood within walking distance to the Commons and down town. This lovely home features gleaming hardwood flooring in the living/dining room and vaulted ceilings through the living/dining room and Kitchen. Truly a move in ready home! **MLS N30026585 Chris Bowron and Audrey Wright.**

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Cutting cheese sets world record for Canadian grocery chain

Loblaws breaks record for cracking the most cheese wheels at the same time

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

A world record was set Saturday for the most people cutting the cheese at the same time.

It took place in grocery stores across Canada, including Virgil.

Although officially, says Phil Leboudec, owner of Phil's Valu-mart, it's called cracking the cheese. A Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese wheel, to be exact—the best cheese in the world, in his opinion—or Parmesan cheese, a hard cheese from a particular region in Italy.

Unofficially, he says, more than 1,000 cheese wheels were cracked at exactly noon on Saturday, all in Loblaws stores, all in front of audiences, with documents and photographs to be sent to the Guinness Book of World Records.

More than 360 Loblaw stores took part in the attempt of cracking the most Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese wheels open at the same time.

The world record sits at 426 wheels, achieved in 2013.

Cracking the 80-pound wheel is not an easy task, says Leboudec. It's done through a series of scores and cuts, with several different knives. He chose employee Tagg Rive, for his youth and strength, to be his cheese-cutter.

"It all went well," says Leboudec. "We did our piece. And Loblaws has broken the record."

Phil's Valu-mart employee Tagg Rive prepares to crack a wheel of cheese as part of a cross-Canada attempt to break a Guinness World Record at noon Saturday.

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Pub fare attracts Food Network

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

Steak and ale pie. Shepherd's pie. Sticky toffee pudding.

Hungry yet?

The three examples of traditional pub food, and to some, comfort food, can be found on the menu of the Garrison House, a restaurant to be featured on the Food Network's You Gotta Eat Here.

The crew of the popular TV series was in Niagara-on-the-Lake last week filming at the restaurant, owned by chef David Watt and Leigh Atherton, who is most often found out front, welcoming guests.

The restaurant at the corner of Niven Rd. and Niagara Stone Rd. was closed Friday, while Watt made his signature dishes for the camera, with host and funny guy John Catucci adding the expected witty comments.

Saturday, the film crew was back to record the host talking to customers about the food and why they like to eat at the Garrison House.

It's a restaurant just enough out set back from the road to be off the beaten path, with a mostly local clientele.

That could change, says Atherton, who knows the popularity of the TV show and the effect it could have on business once it airs later in the spring, or possibly early summer—in time for the tourist season.

But there will always be room for the restaurant's loyal following, even if she has to usher locals in the back door, she jokes.

Series producer Steven Mitchell says recommendations for show-worthy eating establishments can come in many forms, including the research team of five people, hotline tips, or just a "general buzz" on the street.

He has a connection to NOTL that drew him to the restaurant when he was visiting last summer, so he knew the quality of the food and the great atmosphere, he said.

"The food is amazing. I had the steak and ale pie when I was here last August and it was really, really good."

He also looks for "people with a passion for a particular kind of food, and they want to share it."

He certainly found that in Watt, he said. He also looks for contemporary twists to traditional fare.

"For example, we see a million shepherd's pies. We're looking for something unusual, something a restaurant does to make it their own."

In the case of Watt's pub fare, he adds, "I don't know that there are any secrets, I just know that it's really, really good."

Once the show's producers do their research, they have to present their choices to the Food Network for their "seal of approval," says Mitchell.

"They have to believe in it before we go any further."

Penny Coles Niagara Advance
Chef David Watt and Leigh Atherton, owners of the Garrison House, welcome You Gotta Eat Here host John John Catucci (centre) to their kitchen.

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Kid Mitchell opening at Virgil Stampede kick–off concert

Mentor Kim Mitchell bringing hand-picked young musicians with him for Virgil concert

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

When Kim Mitchell comes to Virgil in May, he's bringing some young talent with him—one of them local.

The Kid Mitchell band of five youngsters, chosen through a contest held last fall, will be the opening band.

Mitchell and Q107, the Toronto radio station where he has been an afternoon announcer since 2004, launched the project to create the band.

Mitchell, the Juno-winning frontman for 1970's band Max Webster who went on to a hit-making solo career, hand-picked five young musicians from audition videos from about 100 nine to 14-year-olds and took them into a Toronto recording studio to remake his 1989 hit, Rock 'n' Roll Duty.

One of them is 10-year-old Christian Lalama of St. Catharines, the youngest band member to be chosen.

The St. Peter Catholic School student has been taking piano lessons since he was four years old.

When he played for his audition video, his dad convinced him to wear his "I pee in pools" T-shirt—his musician father, Paul Lalama, thought it would make him stand out, he said.

It worked—he impressed Mitchell with his talent and his attitude, and became the keyboard player for the band.

The video of that Toronto studio performance has attracted more than 20,000 views on YouTube. And in addition to a couple of live performances, the Kid Mitchell band was the subject of a YTV documentary, Born to Rock, that includes Kim Mitchell.

Rock 'n' Roll Duty is the only Kim Mitchell tune the boys play—Lalama says he has a list of about 14 songs he has to learn over the next few weeks, with help from his uncle Mark Lalama, who was the piano player for Canadian Idol.

They are all "classic rock" songs, says the youngster, "from bands like Led Zepplin. They're songs I've listened to, but I've never played them."

He will also spend some time with the other boys in the band rehearsing for what looks like a busy summer line-up, as they open for Mitchell on tour.

Is he excited to be on the same stage as Kim Mitchell?

Had he ever heard of Kim Mitchell before he made the audition tape?

Yes to both, says Lalama.

"It's pretty amazing, pretty cool to be playing with him. He's a great musician. He looks a lot different now, and he's really nice."

"It's wild to see what they're doing," says Paul, of his son and the other young band members.

"It's been crazy to see the TV show, the video, the money that's been spent on a recording session. This is such a great opportunity."

It's also had an effect on Christian's commitment to music, says Paul.

"It's propelled him to work even harder, and in the last few months he's become twice as good. It's been an opportunity for him to see the reward for his hard work. I'm really, really thankful this happened."

When Christian's mentor takes his band out on the road, it will include an appearance in Virgil in May, at the outdoor concert that kicks off the annual Victoria Day weekend Virgil Stampede.

Along with Lalama, the Kid Mitchell band includes singer Ben Blackman, Adam Allen on bass, drummer Gabriel Giammaria and guitarist Ayden Jacobs.

When the Virgil Business Association decided to step up their fundraising efforts and add a Friday evening concert to what was already a three-day event, Mitchell seemed an obvious choice for the demographic the event targets. There will be a wine and beer garden sponsored by the Steamwhistle Brewery, the Niagara College Teaching Brewery, and Pillitteri Estate wines.

With final say over opening acts, it was Mitchell's choice to feature the Kid band.

Doors for the Virgil concert open at 6 p.m., with locals James Brown and Mike Dixon playing some acoustics and percussions before the Kid Mitchell band takes the stage. Mitchell himself is expected to perform from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m., when the concert will be shut down to conform to the town's noise bylaw.

Tickets to Mitchell's May 16 show at the Virgil Sports Park are $20, plus tax, and are available online at ticketscene.ca.

Featuring five of today's best young rockers, winners of the first ever Kid Mitchell Band contest and hand-picked by Kim Mitchell, will open for Mitchell himself at the May 16 concert in Virgil. The band includes Adam Allen on bass, Christian Lalama (front) from St. Catharines melting the keys, Gabriel Giammaria on drums, Ayden Jacobs on guitar and Ben Blackman rocking vocals.

Photo submitted

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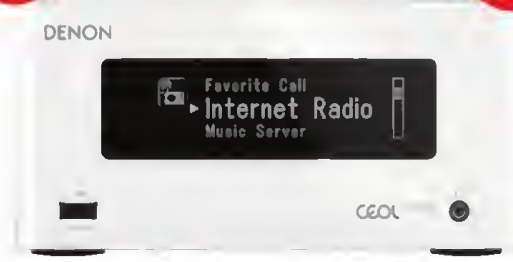

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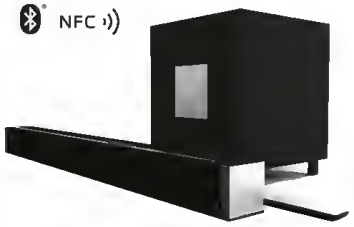

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Elegant and electric, car part of 'brand'

Real estate broker splashes out for office on wheels

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

Kevan O'Connor admits he enjoys driving a nice car.

But 'nice' doesn't come close to describing his newest vehicle, a totally electric Tesla.

It's an evironmentally-friendly machine, with no gas engine. It has green licence plates issued by the province, along with a rebate of $8,500. And it's permitted in the HOV commuter lanes on highways, with just one person.

But the eco-friendly factor wasn't the draw, says the Niagara-on-the-Lake real estate broker.

Nor was the fact that it will save him about $3,000 a year in gas.

What does rate high with O'Connor is that it's a fabulous-looking vehicle, and it's fast.

It can travel from zero to 100 km/hour in four seconds.

"I've always liked to have a nice car—I spend a lot of time in it. But more than that, it's part of my brand," says O'Connor.

"Having a decent vehicle is part of doing business with high-end clientele, and this is more than decent. This is exotic. We all have to spend money to buy a car, but this car is a lot of fun."

Kevan O'Connor is enjoying his new electric Tesla—it's fast, it's a great ride, and it's like having a mobile office.

Photo submitted

O'Connor doesn't want to talk about how much he spent on it, but the base price for the car is $80,000, and extras take it over the $100,000 mark.

"It's not for the faint of heart," he says.

The fun part comes in part from the toys—including a 19-inch screen that is always connected to the internet, and an entertainment system that includes satellite and Slacker, an internet radio system which provides the ability to customize a radio station.

For car enthusiasts, O'Connor's Model S P85 extras also include a panoramic glass roof, 21" turbine wheels with high-performance tires, and a high-performance battery with a maximum range of 300 miles.

The body is all aluminum, and with the slab of batteries that runs the length of the car, weighs in at about 4,500 pounds.

"The battery life is the main consideration. It has about an eight to 10-year lifespan, and it can be replaced, but it's not cheap."

It charges at home overnight with a heavy-duty outlet, or a super-charger on the highway gets the job done in 30 minutes.

The cost of charging at home, he says, is about $5.

Although O'Connor says he'll drive the Tesla to Florida next winter, with "thousands of places" to charge it along the way, his main consideration was to drive around Niagara, using it as a mobile office.

When he considers the cost, he says, which he freely admits could seem a little frivolous, he justifies it to himself by weighing the value of the vehicle as a tool for doing business.

He can bring up photos of properties on the screen, take his customers on a tour of the inside of a house, or provide an aerial satellite view, which is especially helpful with large commercial properties, he says.

"You can save a lot of time by allowing people to determine what they want to see and what they don't. It's a very useful tool, a mobile accessory. It makes time spent in the car much more productive."

And more comfortable.

In addition to being a great-looking vehicle, "it feels different. There is no transmission, no feeling of a motor or gear-shifting. It's very smooth, and there's no engine noise—just the sound of the wind."

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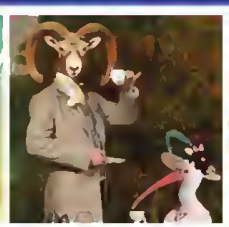

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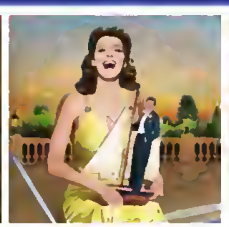

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A 19" computer screen with internet access sits in the middle of the console, a great business tool for a real estate broker. It's just one of the many benefits of the Tesla S, the 2013 Motor Trend Car of the Year.
Photo submitted

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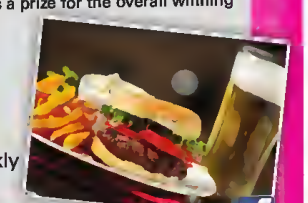

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The Byron Consort Choir, of Harrow School, London, England, will present a wonderful evening of music at St. Mark's Church on Byron St. Friday, April 4 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are $20 and are available through the parish office or at the door. This is one of three choir concerts presented by St. Mark's this year. The Byron Consort Choir consists of about 16 Harrow boys and four adults singing a mixture of unaccompanied sacred and secular music.

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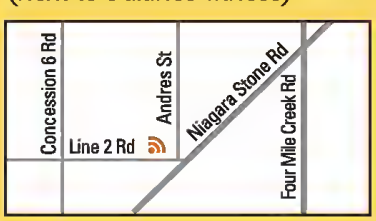

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EMS Fleet Operations moving to NOTL

Mike DiBattista QMI Agency Niagara

Dignitaries were on hand Tuesday for the official construction kick-off of Niagara Region's new Emergency Medical Services' (Niagara EMS) Fleet Operations and Logistical Services Centre in NOTL. Located at the Compass Centre on Westwood Court near the Glendale and QEW interchange, it will house the fleet centre, supplies and quartermaster store. Celebrating the launch of the construction in preparation for the move are EMS Chief Kevin Smith, Lord Mayor Dave Eke, Kenneth Franasiak of Calamar Construction, and Regional Chair Gary Burroughs.

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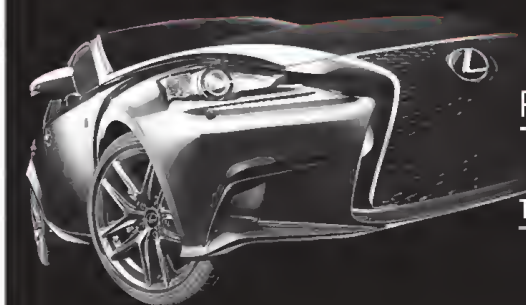

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Diane Pellicone, curatorial assistant at RiverBrink Art Museum, with the newest exhibition, 35: Women Artists in the RiverBrink Collection, on display until February 2015.

Julie Jocsak QMI Agency Niagara

RiverBrink Art Museum gives women in history their due

Female artists subject of new show at Queenston art museum

Don Fraser
QMI Agency

They are talented female artists who were often given short shrift during their creative lives.

And now RiverBrink Art Museum is giving them a show of their own.

In one room, a Mary Cassatt piece called "Sketch for Sara ... Feeding her Dog" features a wispy, mournful looking young girl.

Another 1929 piece by the renowned Canadian painter Emily Carr portrays a haunting barn and burial ground site on Nootka Island, B.C.

It's part of a new show called "35: Women Artists in the RiverBrink Collection" that the Queenston gallery has pulled together from the permanent collection.

Those works are part of the Weir Foundation established by Sam Weir, who built the Niagara River estate that became an art gallery after he died in 1981.

"Women artists have always been relatively underrepresented within institutions and also in collections," said RiverBrink Diane Pellicone, during a weekend tour.

"Sam Weir was a product of his time. So of the 500 artists he collected from over his lifetime, only 35 were women," Pellicone said.

"It doesn't mean there wasn't quality art produced by women artists, just that there was an under-representation."

The gallery is also trying to redress that situation through some recent additions from women artists.

Most of the artists in the exhibit created their works from the late 1800's to early 1900's. A large number, but not all of them are Canadian.

The 35 show is one of two exhibits at RiverBrink — the other, "The War of 1812-14: People and Places" are both curated by Debra Antoncic and continue until February, 2015.

Sparks visit local veterinary clinic

NOTL Sparks visited Upper Canada Animal Hospital Monday, where they were given a tour by Dr. Angela Granacki, veterinary technician Krystin Labatte and client care specialist Lisa Koski. The girls' favourite part of the evening was meeting Baen, the bullmastiff, a gentle giant. The girls were shown X-rays of an ingested wedding ring and a battery, as well as X-rays of bones, and listened to Baen's heart beat. Visiting with Baen are Sparks Taylor Cherney, Lauren Shedden, Lola-Jane Brown and Luci Beccario.

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9:30 am: 1st Service & CE
(childcare provided during entire service);
10:30 am: Coffee Time; 11:00 am: 2nd Service
(childcare provided mid-way through service)
Message by: Kevin Bayne, Pastor
Title: True & False Confessions

VILLAGE Bible Church

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10:00am Coffee Time + 10:30am Worship Service
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10:00 am German Service
Message by Udo Woelke
11:00 am Worship Service
Message by Stephen Cox
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Parliament Oak comes home with silver

Parliament Oak co-captains Carrie Robinson and Molly Bowron accept the silver consolation plaque for their team's second place finish at the recent DSBN finals for elementary school girls basketball. Divisional playoffs took place at Eastdale School in Welland.

Photo submitted

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Bantam champs

The VanNoort bantams of the NOTL Minor Hockey Association clinched the league B championship. After sweeping the round robin series with six wins, They lost the first in a best-of-three series against Grimsby, but won the next two 7-0 and 5-0. Earning two shutouts, was call-up goaltender Evan Hills, who made many impressive saves as he filled in for injured goalie Nick Andrusiuw. The championship was a real team effort, with excellent direction provided by the coaching staff of Ken Hendriks, Ed Biega, James Sawatsky and Paul Lett.

Photo submitted

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Obituaries | In Memoriam | Thanks | Births | Celebrations | More

Obituaries

URE, Robert - Passed away peacefully with his family side at the Greater Niagara General Hospital, in Niagara Falls on Wednesday March 19, 2014. In his 87th year, Robert John Ure, beloved husband of Dorothy Ure (nee Rae) for over fifty years. Fondly remembered by his nieces and nephews. Special friend of Ron Balasiuk and his wife Pat. Predeceased by his brother Fred and by his parents Douglas and Rose. Robert was a lifetime resident of St. Catharines. He graduated as a civil engineer working alongside his father and brother in their downtown surveyor's business. Robert was a member of the St. Catharines Rotary Club and the Niagara Lodge #2 A.F. and A.M.G.R.C.. Robert celebrated his faith at Grace United Church, in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Special thanks to the outstanding staff at the Niagara Falls Hospital for their sensitivity, care and professionalism. Friends may call at the **PATRICK J. DARTE FUNERAL CHAPEL,** 39 Court Street, St. Catharines (905-685-6584) on Friday March 21, 2014 from 7 pm to 9pm. A funeral service will be held in the funeral home on Tuesday, March 25, 2014 at 11am. Memorial donations to the Ontario Heart & Stroke Foundation would be appreciated.
"Bob will be remembered for his gentle nature and his unending supply of stories."

In Memoriams

In Loving Memory of
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March 27, 2003.

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For those who knew and loved her,
Her memory will never grow cold.

My love always. . . .
Eileen

In Memoriams

ZACHARY ANTIDORMI
August 10, 1994 - March 27, 1997

In Memory of our perfect Grandson, whose life was tragically taken 17 long years ago.

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You are forever loved,
forever remembered
and painfully missed.

Nana and Mungo

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8. Always unplug small appliances whenthey are not in use.
9. Never overload electrical circuits, and always replace cracked or frayed cords.
10. Have your furnace and chimney inspected and cleaned every year.

Advance Notices Community Calendar

EUCHRE PARTY

Fri., MAR. 28 ~ & ~ Fri., APR. 11
7:30 pm

Virgil Women's Institute. www.fwio.on.ca
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Addison Hall, St. Mark's Church
41 Byron Street, NOTL
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Saturday, April 5, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

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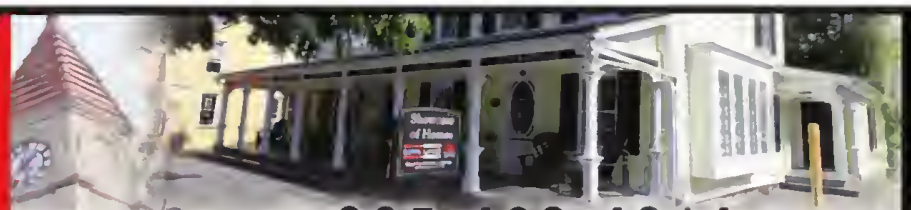

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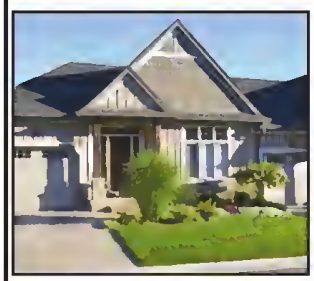

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